

## **Assessing hiring preferences and discipline orientation of criminal justice programs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper details the findings from a self-administered survey of membership of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) exploring the perceived preferences of hiring full-time and part-time faculty in criminal justice and the orientations of programs in criminal justice. With an n of 450, the results showed that institution type was the most predictive variable associated with hiring decisions related to the rank and experience of the prospective faculty candidate. Also, having a Ph.D. was ranked as the most important criteria for faculty full-time faculty positions. Teaching experience, practical experience, and research agenda were grouped similarly on importance for hiring decisions. Part-time faculty hiring decisions were not significantly different on all areas of faculty criteria.

Keywords: Pracademic, criminal justice education, hiring criminal justice faculty, academic hiring preferences, faculty selection, academic credentials.

## INTRODUCTION

This article explores questions regarding the hiring preferences of Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) members with respect to full-time and part-time faculty and the preferred educational degrees of prospective faculty. One can look to the debate over the Juris Doctorate (J.D.) degree in criminal justice (CJ) education. It is often argued in certain circles that a J.D. is not an essential member of a CJ faculty. With the development of mock trial teams under criminal justice, and the interest in CJ as a pre-law degree, practicing attorneys are often well-suited to advise and teach students who aspire to be attorneys. Similarly, many CJ students have an interest in a career (or currently work) in a criminal justice organization. Faculty members with occupational experiences in criminal justice organizations can be well-suited to teach and advise students with these interests.

As the discipline of criminal justice evolves, the tension between its “preprofessional” orientation and academic orientation is often reflected in faculty hiring decisions. Job postings with the phrases “a J.D. is not an acceptable degree for this position” or “a Ph.D. is required for this position” and “teaching experience desired” are common in CJ faculty position announcements. It is rare to see criminal justice faculty announcements seeking practical experience as a desired credential.

In some circles, it is believed that teaching experience coupled with practical experience is also an important factor when considering faculty appointments. Anecdotally, however, a refrain is heard throughout the Academy that there is a bias against faculty with real-world, practical experience in criminal justice programs. The pejorative expression “cop shop” is used to describe a faculty with a concentration of former/retired law enforcement or corrections officers.

There is a sense that the struggle to achieve legitimacy as a social science, therefore requiring Ph.D.-level faculty, might overlook the opportunity to staff CJ departments with faculty who have a combinations of academic credentials and practical experience and who can share valuable lessons from experience that academics alone cannot easily convey.

This is a delicate subject. Some of the responses collected during this research likened this inquiry to “picking at old wounds” or asserting that this was a subject already “asked and answered.” Nonetheless, this is an important time to renew this discussion. The world has changed, the field of criminal justice has changed, and the academic discipline of criminal justice must change as well. The academic and practical orientations of criminal justice must work together in a balanced approach, and one cannot exist without the other. Ensuring that criminal justice programs share that sense of balance with researchers, practitioners, and attorneys working together to provide sound research and effective teaching is as important now as ever. This research explores one aspect of this debate, the critical aspect of faculty hiring decisions.

When compared to well-established academic disciplines on campuses, criminal justice is a relative newcomer, stemming from the late 1960s, with many departments spinning off from sociology programs. Following the riots and uprisings based on racial discrimination and resistance to the Viet Nam War, the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967) made recommendations for improved access to higher education for police officers. Through the establishment of the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP), more than 1,000 community colleges, colleges, and universities established programs in police science or law enforcement.

The LEEP program met with some success but came under fire from the U.S. General Accountability Office (GAO), which found program oversight lacking (US GAO Report, 1980). As a result, LEEP folded, but proved to serve as a genesis for CJ programs across the U.S. Without criminal justice-trained faculty, many of the courses and programs were staffed with instructors from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Establishment of criminal justice programs to develop scholars of criminal justice came much later, so the discipline is still relatively young, when compared to many other programs and departments on campuses.

Criminal justice programs are housed in a number of different departments, ranging from sociology to public administration to being a stand-alone department. Some institutions choose to label the programs as professional studies, while others place criminal justice in the social sciences. Regardless of this placement and the point of view, there has been a significant growth in the discipline over the past 50 years. CJ shares similarities with other disciplines that have a practical orientation.

The fields of political science, business, law, medicine, education, architecture, nursing, engineering, and allied health rely extensively on individuals with practical experience and educational credentials to teach both undergraduate and graduate students. There is extensive “cross-fertilization” in these fields between the academic and practical arenas. There is no doubt that universities act as training grounds for new professionals, foster research to advance the field, and provide opportunities for full-time practitioners to teach and conduct research.

Criminal justice departments have responded to the needs of the discipline and have established programs and coursework focusing on mental health, leadership, fraud, and cybersecurity. This flexibility to react to needs is essential to both the Academy and the field, but most importantly for the students.

## **GENESIS OF STUDY**

During several past conferences for the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) and American Society of Criminology (ASC), panel discussions were conducted to open a discussion to better understand if there was a sense of issues stemming from the “pedigree” of faculty, and whether there were perceived hiring preferences for Ph.D. candidates versus candidates with practical experience.

It was suggested that a survey be created and administered to assess the perspective and perceptions of ACJS members on these issues and concerns. This research seeks to expand upon these discussions and shed some light onto the hiring preferences of our Academy. With data there may be opportunity to better understand the trends towards hiring preferences for CJ faculty.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the seminal work *The Human Side of Enterprise*, McGregor (1960) said “theory and practice are inseparable.” As applied to academic business departments, Iyer and Clark (1998) surveyed department chairs in accounting to rate the importance of 18 factors in deciding when to invite applicants for interviews for an assistant professor position.

Among the top-rated factors were teaching experience, course evaluations, experience with research skills, dissertation topic, publications in refereed journals, and character references.

Chairs of programs that offered a Ph.D. tended to rate research-related attributes as more important than chairs of programs that offered only a bachelor's or master's degree. Chairs of four-year colleges tended to see teaching abilities and experience as paramount. Factors rated in the middle were work experience, professional certification, and presentations at meetings (Iyer & Clark, 1998).

Morn (1995) reviewed the evolution of police education from the vocational to the academic, commencing with the University of California at Berkeley in the 1930s. Ward and Webb (1984) looked at the efforts to improve quality in criminal justice education. The study called for potential accreditation, funding for resources, and setting minimum standards. Their review identified eight core areas on which criminal justice or criminology programs focused.

In the criminal justice discipline, there has been lively discussion over the appropriateness of having a faculty member with a J.D. as opposed to a Ph.D. in criminal justice departments. This debate started in an article in *ACJS Today* (2002) and continued in subsequent issues. More recently the discussion was advanced in the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*. (Hemmens, Hunter, 2008) discussed faculty credentials including the J.D., while Enriquez (2008) responded to the Hemmens & Hunter treatise (2008) to further weigh in on CJ faculty credentials and continue the discussion about what constitutes a terminal degree. The issues were later reviewed by Hemmens in *ACJS Now* (2011), advocating consideration of merging ACJS and ASC, to help reduce the differences still existing in the argument of criminology vs. criminal justice programs and the academics in each area of study. Madden and Hartley (2011) continued the dialogue about the J.D. in CJ education, following the work of Hemmens (2008).

Clear (2001) and Hunter (2008) voiced the concerns and disparagement by many of "cop shop" type faculty in the field, or those with practical experience and academic credentials of a terminal degree.

In *A New Agenda for Higher Education*, Sullivan and Rosin (2008) felt that there is a role for "shaping the life of a mind for practice." There is importance, benefit, and relevance to incorporating practical experience on campuses across the globe. In academic program after program, internships, externships, observation, and practicums have become essential in preparing students for the real world. Posner (2009) discussed the term *pracademic*. Since Posner's article many academics have used the term in journals and elsewhere. Volpe and Chandler (2007) described a bridging role from that of the "pracademic." Price (2001) introduced the term in the same context of academic and practicing professionals in public works.

del Carmen and Polk (2001) attempted to better understand the hiring preferences and interest in generalists or specialists. Reviewing job announcements, they attempted to identify what credentials were sought, with what specialties institutions were seeking for faculty candidates. They found that when seeking faculty at certain ranks, specific credentials were desired. For example, 98% of job advertisements called for a Ph.D. for those seeking an assistant professor position, while 95% of the advertisements desired the Ph.D. for those seeking an associate professor position. Adams and DeFleur (2005) studied the acceptability of online doctorates when considering faculty candidates.

Finckenauer (2005) offered ideas for the Academy to improve the quality of criminal justice education. Finckenauer posits that accountability is essential for CJ programs, and details the differences between training and education and training, and discusses CJ programs focused on criminal justice practice and policy. In addition, Finckenauer (2005) felt that CJ programs should focus on the global aspects of crime, the role of science in CJ, homeland security and terrorism, and evidence-based crime control and prevention.

Applegate, et al (2009) studied a representative sample of faculty members to assess the extent to which certain attributes affected whether an applicant for an assistant professor position would be invited for an on-campus interview. Hunter (2008) focused on the need for certification standards in CJ education to improve quality. Applegate, et al (2009) reviewed many CJ faculty applicant attributes that would affect whether they were invited for a campus interview. Dependent on the institutional level, it was found that certain academic credentials were sought. Cepiku (2011) looked at the divide between research and practice in public management, focusing on gaining an understanding of academia's core business: research and teaching. Cepiku conducted analysis of secondary data and a review of the literature on knowledge production and collaborative research, along with views of senior academics and practitioners in order to offer suggestions for future approaches.

While CJ students may gravitate towards law enforcement topics and issues, it appears that some faculty, who have followed a more traditional path to academia, have reservations about the inclusion of "less academic" peers (Tewksbury & Vito, 2012). Tewksbury and Vito (2011) conducted a study to assess the scholarly productivity of criminal justice faculty based on differences between those with practical experience and those without. The study found that law enforcement scholars are not as productive in journal publications as traditional scholars, but show greater productivity in applied articles and textbooks (Tewksbury & Vito, 2011)

Tewksbury and Vito (2011) argue that law enforcement scholars were found likely to focus on scholarship of teaching and application, while traditional faculty focus on scholarship of discovery and integration. The authors argue that publication count should not be the only measure of contribution and effectiveness

Morreale and McCabe (2012) provided discussion on the perceived difficulties that are sometimes presented between academics and pracademics in CJ academic areas. Griffin et al (2012) discussed the issues and arguments of the J.D. in criminal justice education. A survey was also conducted on the available joint J.D./Ph.D. programs recently established in the United States. Griffin established that there are opportunities for lawyers to obtain a terminal degree and therefore the J.D. is not a terminal degree, in the traditional sense.

While there has been work to help determine the preferred level and type of degree of hired faculty in CJ, no literature was found that focused on the hiring preferences for criminal justice relating to practical experience.

## **METHOD**

In order to explore faculty hiring preferences a self-administered survey was created and distributed through the Internet to the entire ACJS membership mailing list. In general, the survey solicited feedback on the likelihood of hiring prospective faculty members with various combinations of education and experience. The survey also explored the views of the ACJS regarding the orientation of its program and the goals of a criminal justice education.

## **Variables**

The survey contained 34 questions, with a focus on the credentials and experience in hiring preferences, discipline orientation, and distinction between academic and practical. The survey included a set of nine demographic questions, and one open-ended question seeking qualitative data.

Respondents were asked to report their age, years of practical criminal justice career experience, number of peer-reviewed journal articles published, and the number of presentations made at academic conferences. Respondents were also asked to report their academic rank, the highest degree held, the highest degree offered at the institution where they worked, and to rank the importance (on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being either the highest and most important) of the following requirements for an academic position at their institution: teaching experience, having a Ph.D., practical experience, and a record of scholarship.

In addition, respondents were also asked several questions in order to gauge their hiring preferences and the hiring preferences at the institution where they worked. These responses were measured on a Likert scale with categories ranging from “Very Likely” to “Not Very Likely.”

Below is a list of the questions, calling for a rating scale from Very Likely to Not Very Likely:

1. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member with a J.D.?
2. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member who had a master’s degree in criminal justice or related field and extensive practical experience in the criminal justice field?
3. How likely would your program hire a potential ADJUNCT faculty member who had a master’s degree in criminal justice or related field and extensive practical experience in the criminal justice field?
4. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member with a doctoral/terminal degree in criminal justice or a related field and no practical experience in the criminal justice field?
5. How likely would your program hire a potential ADJUNCT faculty member with a doctoral degree in criminal justice or a related field and no practical experience in the criminal justice field?
6. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member with a doctoral degree and extensive research experience?
7. How likely would your program hire a potential ADJUNCT faculty member with a doctoral degree and extensive research experience?
8. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member with a law degree (J.D.)?
9. How likely would your program hire a potential ADJUNCT faculty member with a law degree (J.D.)?
10. How likely would your program hire a potential ADJUNCT faculty member who had a doctoral/terminal degree that was not a Ph.D.? (Ed.D, D.P.A., etc.)
10. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member who had a doctoral degree that was not a Ph.D.? (Ed.D, D.P.A., etc.)
11. How likely would your program hire a potential FULL-TIME faculty member with a doctoral degree, practical experience, and extensive research experience?

The following questions used the scales listed below:

*Please RANK the following characteristics in order of importance as it relates to potential faculty candidates: (1 = highest, 4 = Lowest)*

- Teaching experience
- Ph.D. or related doctoral/terminal degree
- Practical experience
- Record of scholarship

The next few questions focus on you as a respondent.

- Age
- Faculty Rank
- Years of full-time college teaching
- Highest Degree Held

*Please select the highest degree your educational institution grants:*

Associate's degree — Bachelor's Degree — Master's Degree — Law Degree (J.D.) —  
Doctoral Degree (Ph.D.) — Doctoral Degree (D.P.A., D.B.A., Ed.D.)

*Type of Institution (check all that apply)*

Bricks and mortar — Face-to-face — Online only

*Criminal Justice Practical Experience (Years)*

*Please indicate the number of peer reviewed articles you have published as an author or  
coauthor. (Number)*

*Please indicate the number of presentations you have participated in at academic conferences.  
(Number)*

Survey Respondent Demographics

*Rank (select one)*

Adjunct Instructor — Assistant Professor — Associate Professor — Professor — Not Applicable

*Time in Academia (select one)*

Less than 1 year — 1-5 years — 6-10 years — 11-20 years — 21-30 years — 31+ years

*Please evaluate the following statements and indicate the degree to which you agree with each  
statement:*

Legend: Strongly Agree—Agree—Neutral—Disagree—Strongly Disagree

22. CJ departments/programs should be involved in preparing students for careers in  
criminal justice agencies.

23. CJ departments/programs should be preparing students as researchers in criminal  
justice.

24. CJ departments/programs should be preparing students to be critical thinkers.

25. It is important for CJ departments/programs to have full-time faculty members with  
practical experience in criminal justice agencies (police, courts, corrections, victim  
services, etc.).

26. It is important for CJ departments/programs to have full-time faculty members who are attorneys.
27. It is important for CJ departments/programs to have ADJUNCT faculty members with practical experience in criminal justice agencies.
28. It is important for CJ departments/programs to have ADJUNCT faculty members who are attorneys.
29. It is important for CJ departments/programs to have criminal justice faculty teach courses relative to their practical experience (i.e. former/current corrections officials teach corrections courses, etc.).
30. It is important for CJ departments/programs to have FULL-TIME faculty members who have an active research agenda.
31. As a discipline, criminal justice should be oriented toward research that builds criminological theory.
32. As a discipline, criminal justice should be oriented toward research that improves the operation of agencies in the criminal justice system.
33. A working relationship is necessary between the academic community in criminal justice and the organizations that are tasked with carrying out criminal justice policies and programs.
34. Criminal justice is a preprofessional discipline such as business, engineering, or nursing.

#### *Qualitative Question*

35. Please take the time to enter any comments or thoughts or concerns you have relating to the academic/pracademic debate. Your comments are as important to us as your responses to the previous questions.

#### **Sample**

The survey was distributed via e-mail to all active members of ACJS as of January 2012. The survey requested full-time ACJS member professors to consider completing the survey at a link leading to an electronic survey mediated through Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). An e-mail was sent to the ACJS membership (N = 1530). Reminder messages were sent out at one-week intervals in weeks 1, 2, and 3, and the survey was closed after 30 days. The rate of return was 30.06 percent, with 456 of the 1530 members responding with completed surveys. At a 95 percent confidence level, the confidence interval for this sample is +/- 3.82 percent. Although a higher response rate would have been preferred, the confidence level and confidence interval obtained indicate that the results are an appropriate representation of the ACJS membership.

#### **RESULTS**

Table 1 presents descriptive results about the respondents of the survey. As can be seen in the table, the average respondent is an established and experienced scholar. In the category of faculty rank, 60.1 percent were full professors or associate professors, therefore having tenure in their current position. Also, the number of academic articles is impressive (M=18.1) as are the number of academic conference presentations (M=31.1). Thus the “average” respondent to this



survey from the ACJS membership is a tenured professor with almost 20 peer-reviewed articles and more than 30 conference presentations to his or her credit.

The Ph.D. was the overwhelming leader regarding highest degree held. More than 72 percent of the respondents hold a Ph.D., only 12.9 percent hold a master's degree, and only 7.8 percent hold a law degree. The "other doctorate" category (Ed.D, D.P.A., D.Crim., etc.) was the lowest represented type of degree with only 6.2 percent, or 28 of the respondents in this category. Similarly, more than half of the respondents (M=51.4 percent) were employed at institutions offering a Ph.D. as its terminal degree, one-third of the respondents were from institutions offering a master's degree, and 15.3 percent of the respondents from institutions offering a bachelor's or associate's degree.

Collectively, these results point to a well-established faculty with an outstanding track-record of scholarship, working at high-level institutions. The predominant number of respondents to this survey from the ACJS membership have a Ph.D., publishes and presents frequently, and works at an institution that offers a Ph.D. or master's as a terminal degree. It should come as no surprise that the requirement ranked highest on a prospective faculty appointment was having a Ph.D.

Table 1 (Appendix) presents the percentage of number-one rankings of four possible requirements for a potential faculty hire: teaching experience, a Ph.D., practical experience, and a record of scholarship.

As depicted in Table 1, 71.5 percent of the respondents indicated that a having a Ph.D. was the number-one requirement for a new hire, followed in a distant second by a record of scholarship (23.3 percent), with teaching experience ranked third with 21.5 percent, and practical experience ranked last with 17.2 percent.

As can be seen in Table 2 (Appendix), only 30 percent of respondents indicated they would **LIKELY** hire a person with a master's degree in criminal justice with extensive field experience. Nearly 63 percent of respondents indicated that they would **NOT LIKELY** hire full-time faculty members with these credentials or characteristics. Seventy-five percent indicated they would **LIKELY** hire a person with the credentials or characteristics of a Ph.D. in criminal justice or related field, with no practical experience. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that they would **NOT LIKELY** hire full-time faculty members with these credentials

Nearly 55 percent of respondents indicated that they would **NOT LIKELY** hire full-time faculty members with a law degree. Only 29 percent indicated they would **LIKELY** hire a person with these credentials or characteristics.

Nearly 51 percent of respondents indicated that they would **NOT LIKELY** hire full-time faculty members with a doctorate that was not a Ph.D. Thirty-two percent indicated they would **LIKELY** hire a person with an Ed.D., D.P.A., or other terminal degree credential.

### **Criminal Justice Program Orientation**

Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated they **LIKELY** agree that CJ programs should be involved in preparing students to be critical thinkers. As detailed in Table 3 (Appendix), 87 percent of respondents indicated they **LIKELY** agree that CJ programs should be involved in preparing students for careers in CJ agencies. Approximately 4 percent indicated that they are **NOT LIKELY** to agree that CJ programs should prepare students for CJ careers.

Seventy percent of respondents indicated they **LIKELY** feel that CJ programs should be involved in preparing students as researchers in CJ. Only 6 percent indicated that they are **NOT LIKELY** to feel that CJ program should focus on creating researchers.

### **Part-time Hiring Preferences**

Respondents were asked how likely their program would hire a potential **ADJUNCT** (part-time) faculty member with the same qualifications as discussed in Table 2. Table 4 (Appendix) depicts the responses.

The response to this question indicates that respondents favored applicants with master's degrees and practical experience for adjunct positions, with 89 percent in agreement.

Respondents favored applicants with a J.D., by an 80 percent margin, for adjunct positions.

Table 5 (Appendix) depicts the logistic regression analysis comparing the likelihood of selection for full-time faculty positions for candidates with a master's degree, J.D., or a professional doctorate for analysis of the different background characteristics of the respondents. According to Table 5, there is a significant relationship between the likelihood of being hired and whether the respondent has a Ph.D. Respondents with Ph.D.s are Not Likely to hire full-time faculty members with a master's, J.D., or professional doctorate.

In Table 5, the response categories were coded with a "1" representing "Very Likely" and a "5" representing "Very Unlikely." Therefore, a positive beta-weight reported as the logistic regression coefficient would correspond to the lower likelihood of being hired. For example, in Table 5, the  $b = 1.83$ , which corresponds to a 6.21 times less likelihood that a respondent with a Ph.D. would recommend hiring a candidate with a master's degree for a full-time faculty position (significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level). This trend continues with the other categories of potential full-time faculty candidates, where respondents with Ph.D.s are significantly less likely to hire candidates with J.D.s or professional doctorates. In fact, the strongest association presented in Table 5 is that Ph.D.s are almost nine times less likely to hire candidates with professional doctorates for full-time positions.

Table 5 also indicates that institutional level (i.e.: R-1 institutions versus community colleges or teaching institutions) might be a factor behind some faculty hiring decisions. According to Table 5, respondents working at institutions offering an associate's and bachelor's degree as the highest degree offered are slightly more likely to hire candidates with a master's degree or professional doctorates for full-time positions. In this case the  $b$  weights are negative, which corresponds to a higher level of agreement with the likelihood of being hired. At schools offering an associate's degree, full-time faculty candidates with a master's and experience are almost 50 times more likely to be hired than at other institutions ( $b = -3.95$ , odds ratio = 0.02;  $p < 0.01$ ), and 5 times more likely to be hired at schools offering a bachelor's degree than other institutions. The relationship for full-time faculty members with a professional doctorate only holds at institutions offering an associate's degree, where candidates with these degrees are more likely to be considered for employment ( $b = -1.50$ , odds ratio = 0.89;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The results presented in Table 5 indicate that there is a combination of factors at work with regards to full-time faculty hiring preferences. First, it appears that respondents with Ph.D.s strongly prefer faculty candidates with Ph.D.s to the exclusion of other candidates. Also, it appears that the institution level and the type of degree awarded is a factor in this decision. Schools that offer higher degrees seek full-time faculty members with higher degrees, or more accurately stated the other way around: schools offering associate's degrees are significantly

more likely to hire a candidate with a professional doctorate and schools offering either an associate's or bachelor's degree are likely to higher faculty candidates with a master's degree plus experience.

## DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this survey seem to dispel many of the suspicions regarding a bias in the criminal justice academy towards pracademics. It appears that practical experience alone is not sufficient to land a faculty position in most criminal justice departments. It is clear from the results that practical experience is undervalued when it comes to the hiring of full-time faculty. Part-time faculty positions, however, do meet similar hiring restrictions, and this makes perfect sense.

As a discipline, criminal justice is in its near infancy. For a criminal justice program to gain credibility and establish itself in its rightful place in the social sciences requires hiring and retaining faculty that have academic credentials, and who conduct rigorous academic research. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that an overwhelming number of respondents indicated that having a Ph.D. was the most important qualification for a full-time faculty member. The other three qualifications (teaching experience, practical experience, and record of scholarship) were far distant choices and garnered about the same percentage of number-one rankings from the respondents. These data, in and of themselves, point not towards a bias against practical experience, but a bias towards having a Ph.D. This conclusion can be drawn from the ranking of preferred credentials, as well as the logistic regression results that show respondents with Ph.D.s are less likely to support the hiring of other faculty with master's degrees, law degrees, or professional doctorates.

Similarly, these results must be viewed within the context of the respondent's institution. Clearly, respondents from institutions where the highest degree offered is an associate's or bachelor's degree view the hiring of faculty with master's degrees, law degrees, and professional doctorates as favorable. This relationship disappears in institutions offering master's and doctoral degrees. These findings also make sense. Institutions where research is not necessarily emphasized do not show a strong need to hire faculty with Ph.D.s. In general, institutions with an associate's degree as the highest degree offered are typically "teaching" institutions. Community colleges, technical schools, etc. have a greater focus on teaching, less on research, and are more geared toward the practical application of criminal justice. Therefore, faculty members with practical experience and master's degrees, law degrees, and professional doctorates would be appropriate choices. However, the same faculty would not be preferred at research-oriented institutions where a Ph.D. would be a better fit.

The age-old argument over what has more importance in higher education, theory or practice, appears to be alive and well in the criminal justice education field. The concerns that "You are too practical, not theoretical enough" versus "You are too theoretical, not practical enough" seem to cause a divide in the discipline, but are not necessarily the reality.

When it comes to the attitudes and beliefs of the ACJS membership it appears that degree and institution matter. There appears to be a bias in the selection of full-time faculty at research-oriented institutions. Since it appears that the Ph.D. is the most desirable characteristic for potential faculty, there also appears to be a bias against potential full-time faculty with master's degrees, law degrees, and professional doctorates. This is an unfortunate conclusion, however,

because individuals with these degrees can offer a wealth of practical experience that could be of value to criminal justice programs regardless of level of degree offered.

## LIMITATIONS

As enlightening as the results of this survey are, they still leave many questions unanswered. Undetermined by this research is the distribution and concentration of the various degrees held by ACJS members. The results show preferences, by institution and by degree, but an understanding about the distribution of faculty at these institutions could be beneficial. Where are the Ph.D.s, J.D.s., and professional doctorates most prevalent? Is there an appropriate mix of these degrees in criminal justice programs in the United States, and should there be? These are still unanswered, yet important, questions to consider.

There is a strong need to provide a foundation in law in every criminal justice program. Therefore, it is believed there is a role for attorneys (prosecutors, defense, etc.) on every faculty. The practical application of criminal justice is essential to a well-rounded education. There should always be a role for faculty with extensive experience working in criminal justice. Essentially, a balance should be struck between the academic and the practitioner, to create a balanced faculty, and provide a balanced education to criminal justice students. It is believed that there is a benefit of diversity of thought and experience to the field, the Academy, and students. Building a faculty in this manner can be challenging and beneficial. Hiring too narrowly by degree (personal or institutional) may not always be the best approach. The survey indicated that there was strong agreement that criminal justice programs should be preparing students for careers, preparing them for research, and making them critical thinkers. Exposure to real-world experiences, as well as challenging empirical research, is a powerful combination and approach to achieve those outcomes. Ignoring one academic perspective over the other shortchanges the student, shortchanges the program, and ultimately, shortchanges the Academy. A balance of ideas and a balance of faculty perspectives appear to be the right approach.

Another missing element from this work is the student perspective. After all, a discussion about hiring preferences from members of the academy represents a one-sided view. A balance of ideas should also include the perspectives of criminal justice students, both current and former. Where is the “value added” from their view? Are criminal justice programs too research oriented, too practically oriented, or does it depend on the type of school? Does it matter, from the students’ perspective, which elements are the most conducive to careers, research, and overall education?

The discipline of criminal justice is growing. Programs are attracting top-notch scholars and teachers, and criminal justice research is exploring society’s most problematic issues. There is a continuous need for professionals in this field and a continuous need for rigorous and robust criminal justice education programs in academic institutions of all levels. Striking the right balance between research, theory, and policy may be the right approach. The continued collaboration between academic and practical orientations will continue to benefit our discipline in the long run. Criminal justice needs “pracademics” and the combination of theory and practice is the long-term solution to continued growth and development of our field.

There are a number of interesting indicators from the results of the survey. Schools that are teaching at the graduate and post-graduate levels are showing a preference for hiring academics with a Ph.D. It was not possible to determine what specialty area was preferred. Clearly, one can find CJ faculty with any number of specializations including anthropology,

sociology, urban studies, psychology, and criminal justice and criminology. It is interesting to note that the expectations of the Certification Board of ACJS, indicate that for a program to attain certification, a high percentage of full-time faculty must be schooled in criminal justice or criminology at the doctoral level or closely related discipline. However, there is no definition of what constitutes a closely related discipline.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research could be conducted with students to identify the preferences and preferred approaches to CJ education. Additional surveys could be administered to seek preferences for hiring in the next five years for comparison and to identify potential trends. Another forthcoming issue worthy of research is whether those with Ph.D.s earned at online higher education institutions will be seriously considered and accepted at most universities.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper is not intended to cause division, but to help identify issues, to discuss the “elephant in the room,” and to look for opportunities to build bridges within the criminal justice discipline. As new faculty are hired in CJ departments, all will be held to college and university academic promotion and tenure standards, most of which include teaching, university and community service, presentations, and publications.

Criminal justice programs do not and should not replicate police or corrections academy training. They are not necessarily training students for first jobs, but instead may be preparing students with a mindset, an intellectual capacity, and an ability for information literacy and critical analysis for their future.

The pracademic has ties, roots, and opportunities for access into active organizations. The need and practice of action research is growing in value to the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the field. The pracademic may have an easier entrée into field agencies. Working with colleagues, tremendous work can be accomplished to advance knowledge in the industry and meet the research needs of CJ departments, in concert with CJ agencies, where possible. Criminal justice faculty should be working to convince administration of the value of action research and community work. Criminal justice does not exist easily in either the theoretical or practical spheres. We should be working to bridge that gap between theory and practice. One of the strongest findings of this research, and an area in which the Academy clearly agrees, is that the focus of criminal justice education should be on developing critical thinkers, preparing students for careers, and preparing them to engage in research. The best approach to achieving these outcomes is undoubtedly a balanced one where theory and practice come together and faculty of all stripes collaborate for the greater good of our discipline.

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## **APPENDIX**

***Table 1 – Coding and Descriptive Statistics***

	%	N
<b>Requirement Ranked as #1 for Teaching</b>		
Teaching	21.5	99
Ph.D.	71.5	329
Practical Experience	17.2	79
Record of Scholarship	23.3	107
<b>Faculty Rank</b>		
1 - Adjunct	5.3	24
2 – Instructor	5.3	24
3 – Assistant Professor	26.8	121
4 – Associate Professor	26.8	121
5 - Professor	33.3	150
6 – Not Applicable	2.4	11
<b>Highest Degree Held</b>		
1 – Bachelor’s	0.2	1
2 – Master’s	12.9	58
3 – J.D.	7.8	35
4 – Ph.D.	72.8	327
5 – Other Doctorate	6.2	28
<b>Institution Level</b>		
1 – Associate’s	7.1	32
2 – Bachelor’s	8.2	37
3 – Master’s	33.3	150
4 – Ph.D.	51.4	232
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Age (Years)	51.0	11.3
Teaching Experience (Years)	4.7	1.4
Practical Criminal Justice Experience (Years)	2.4	1.4
# of Academic Articles Published	18.4	40.9
# of Presentations @ Academic Conf.	31.1	39.0



***Table 2 – Full-Time Hiring Preferences***

	N	LIKELY	Neutral	NOT LIKELY
Master’s degree w/ practical experience	456	30.4	6.1	62.6
Ph.D. with NO practical experience	455	75.4	8.7	15.0
Law degree (J.D.)	450	29.1	13.3	55.4
Professional doctorate (Non-Ph.D.)	453	31.7	15.7	51.1

***Table 3 – Program Orientation***

	N	LIKELY	Neutral	NOT LIKELY
Careers in criminal justice	447	87.2	6.3	3.7
To become researchers in criminal justice	442	70.0	20.0	5.9
Critical thinkers	444	96.1	0.2	0.2

***Table 4 – Part-Time Hiring Preferences***

	N	LIKELY	Neutral	NOT LIKELY
Master’s degree w/practical experience	454	88.7	4.3	5.6
Ph.D. with NO practical experience	453	69.8	12.6	16.1
Law degree (J.D.)	453	80.2	8.7	9.6
Professional doctorate (Non-Ph.D.)	451	55.7	17.8	24.5

***Table 5 – Logistic Regression***

	<b>Masters</b>			<b>J.D.</b>			<b>Prof. Doctorate</b>		
	b	SE	Odds Ratio	b	SE	Odds Ratio	B	SE	Odds Ratio
<b>Faculty Rank</b>									
1 – Adjunct	1.72	1.2	5.56	0.64	1.21	1.90	1.03	1.05	0.98
2 – Instructor	-0.76	1.23	0.93	0.29	1.18	1.34	0.43	1.03	0.18
3 – Assistant Professor	0.16	1.03	1.17	0.08	1.06	1.08	0.74	0.87	0.72
4 – Associate Professor	0.76	1.03	2.14	0.27	1.05	1.31	1.03	0.87	1.42
5 – Professor	0.01	1.04	1.00	-0.11	1.07	0.90	-0.61	0.89	0.49
6 – Not Applicable (ref)									
<b>Highest Degree Held</b>									
1 – Bachelor's	-19.8	40197	0.00	-20.1	40193	0.00	-19.26	40193	0.00
2 – Master's	-0.96	0.67	0.38	0.19	0.66	1.21	1.37	0.78	3.95
3 – J.D.	0.40	0.65	1.49	-0.39	0.72	0.68	1.40	0.78	4.07
4 – Ph.D.	<b>1.83**</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>6.21</b>	<b>2.11**</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>8.25</b>	<b>2.19**</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>8.91</b>
5 – Other Doctorate(ref)									
<b>Institution Level</b>									
1 – Associate's	<b>-3.95**</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>0.02</b>	-0.29	0.61	0.75	<b>-1.50*</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>0.89</b>
2 – Bachelor's	<b>-1.66**</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.19</b>	0.06	0.51	1.07	-0.12	0.50	0.89
3 – Master's	-0.15	0.33	0.86	-0.07	0.32	0.94	-0.36	0.29	0.70
4 – Ph.D. (ref)									
Age (Years)	-0.11	0.22	0.99	-0.19	0.02	0.98	-0.01	0.02	0.40
Teaching Exp.(Years)	-0.06	0.19	1.02	0.12	0.18	1.25	-0.08	0.18	0.92
Practical CJ Exp. (Years)	0.02	0.15	1.01	0.13	0.15	1.14	-0.19	0.14	0.82
# of Acad. Articles Published	0.01	0.01	1.00	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.01	0.01	1.00
# of Present.@ Acad. Conf.	-0.01	0.004	0.21	0.01	0.01	1.01	.002	0.01	1.00
*significant at the p<0.05 level					**significant at the p<0.01 level				